

REMARKS

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of the claims set forth in the Official Action of March 10, 2003, are respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

Status of the Claims

Claim 19 has been amended.

Claims 48-58 have been canceled.

Claims 22, 34 and 45-46 were previously canceled.

Claims 1-18, 39-44, 47, 59 and 60 were previously withdrawn from consideration in this application and are being pursued, as amended, in currently pending Appln. Ser. No. 10/201,491.

Claims 19-21, 23-33 and 35-38 are currently pending in the instant application.

The pending claims were all rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner has rejected all pending claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Godavarti et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,265,037) in view of Woodhams (U.S. Pat. No. 5,474,722) and Ertle et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,312,639).

The remaining independent claim is claim 19 which has been amended. With regard to claim 19, the Examiner asserts that Godavarti et al. teach the basic claimed process of forming a composite article, comprising adding 30-140 mesh wood fibers; drying or heating the fibers to remove moisture; various fillers including glass fibers; and contacting a molten/hot plastic with fibers and then forming the mixture with a die. Office Action, p. 2.

Applicant respectfully submits, that the Godavarti et al. reference does not teach or suggest the method of claim 19, as amended. In particular, whereas Godavarti et al. teach that the *pre-dried* wood and a polypropylene resin are added to a compounder, *see* Godavarti, col. 4, ll. 45-46 and 55-56, the claimed invention provides for a drying process *within the extruder* wherein moisture from both the wood and glass fibers is removed. See Appln., p. 21 (“A heated venting area of the extruder removes moisture from the fiber material. This allows a high volume of fiber material to be dried ‘in-line’ during production.”). In-line moisture removal prevents moisture absorption during the transport of pre-dried wood to the compounder, and removes any moisture that may have settled on the glass fibers prior to compounding. This improvement in the processing of extruded composites is neither shown nor suggested in the cited art. Applicant therefore respectfully requests allowance of claim 19 and all pending dependent claims.

In addition, without conceding the remaining assertions by the Examiner regarding the other dependent claims, Applicant respectfully directs the Examiner to dependent claim 30 which adds the limitation that “the composite article of manufacture is cooled using a water spray system that sprays water on each surface of the composite article of manufacture.” In rejecting this claim, the Examiner notes that “Woodhams also teaches a water spray cooling system (fig. 1, element 20)” The claim however requires that cooling is accomplished by spraying water *on each surface* of the extruded article. See Appln., p. 23 (“The water spray is managed so that it is sprayed equally to all surfaces at the same time so as to dissipate the heat evenly.... To insure that the cooling water is evenly dispersed on the article of manufacture, a matted type conveyer belt is used. Using a matted type conveyor belt permits water to be sprayed over the total surface of the article of manufacture resulting

in even cooling. This is in contrast to a solid conveyor that would not allow the cooling water to spray over the total surface of the article of manufacture.”). Woodhams teaches only the use of a conventional, one-sided water spray system as shown in Fig. 1 (20), rather than spraying water on each surface using, e.g., spray nozzles above and below the article as it passes on a matted conveyor. The spraying of cooling water on each surface is neither shown nor suggested in any of the cited prior art. For this additional reason, claim 30 should be allowed.

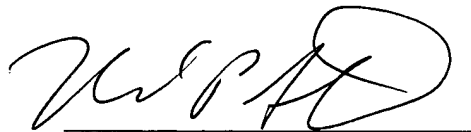
Conclusion

Based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that the currently pending claims 19-21, 23-33 and 35-38 are in condition for allowance. A Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested. Applicants request a three-month extension of time. A check in the amount set forth in 37 C.F.R. § 1.17(a)(2) is enclosed. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge payment of any additional fees associated with this communication to Deposit Account No. 02-4377.

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Respectfully submitted,

BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.



Neil P. Sirota
Patent Office Reg. No. 38,306

(212) 408-2500
Attorneys for Applicants